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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (04/28): DECISION TO CLOSE
GUANTANAMO INSPIRES CONFIDENCE

Main Stories:

Al-Quds and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida lead with news citing Israeli sources of a new "settlement" to be established in the Sawahrah neighborhood in East Jerusalem. The new settlement would include 60 housing units for, "religious and extremist Jews" and was approved by the Jerusalem Municipality two months ago, according to coverage. A Municipality spokesperson noted that the construction is not a settlement since it is on Municipality-owned land. Israeli peace movements are quoted commenting that settlement activities jeopardize the establishment of a Palestinian state. In Palestinian Authority (PA) reaction, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida quotes PA officials warning Israel that the PA will raise the issue of Jerusalem settlement activities before the U.N. Security Council and urge both the Council and the international community to force a halt to all settlement activities, Israeli acceptance of the two-state solution and respect for signed agreements. Al-Quds runs a lead graphic of a map of Jerusalem area settlements Maale Adumim, the Kidar settlements and Palestinian land identified by Israeli authorities to expand the three settlements.

Al-Ayyam leads with an April 27 speech by Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas at a community event in Ramallah, confirming that the PA is in favor of negotiations with Israel based on the Arab Peace Initiative, the two-state solution, and the Roadmap. All front pages cover the speech during which Abbas also noted that the PA will never recognize the "Jewish state" of Israel and is not involved with how Israel chooses to define itself, reporting concludes. In other news, all front pages report on the opening of a new Palestinian Authority diplomatic mission in Caracas on April 27.

Al Ayyam and Al Quds run front page coverage about the U.S.

administration requesting Congress to change laws to allow U.S. aid to a Palestinian unity government that could include Hamas-backed members. The changes would require Hamas-backed members to commit to Middle East Quartet conditions, according to coverage. The article cites passages from an April 27 LA Times story on the same topic.

All front pages highlight swine flu news, with Al-Quds quoting President Obama noting that the flu should raise global concern, but not panic. The report notes that 40 cases have been found so far in five U.S states. Palestinian Authority Minister of Health Mughli notes that no cases of swine flu have been reported in the Palestinian Territories.

Al-Quds' front page reports on the fourth round of "Palestinian national dialogue" that began in Cairo on April 27. The first day did not result in any decisions or agreements on pending issues and will continue for the next four days, according to coverage.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadida runs front page coverage of Palestinian Authority(PA) Premier Fayyad's comments that the PA will soon face a severe financial crisis if donor countries do not fulfill pledges. Speaking at an April 27 cabinet meeting, Fayyad highlighted that the PA will not be able to pay salaries in the West Bank and Gaza should there be a budget shortfall.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Rimonda Tawil opines in Al-Quds independent daily under the

JERUSALEM 00000711 002 OF 002

title, "Obama's courageous position": (04/28) "The decision that U.S. President Obama has made to close Guantanamo and then open an investigation into violations committed there, clearly reflects a real change and new vision on the part of the new U.S. administration... such a presidential decision shows that the U.S., the strongest country in the world, can set an example for all world leaders that they should revise policies when they are proven to be wrong... in addition to Obama's courageous decision, he should now prove that he can translate decisions into action."

2) Hafith Bargouthi opines in Al-Hayat Al Jadida official daily under the title, "Changes"(04/28): "Jordanian King Abdullah is concerned that the regional situation, with no change on the ground, could lead to another war... and that regional peace will only be achieved through the intervention of Obama's administration. This clearly indicates that King Abdullah believes that the new American diplomacy is capable of changing the status quo. However, it must be coupled with a unified Palestinian position. The factions who are talking in Cairo must also recognize that the region does not need another war and that they must act in the interest of the Palestinian people before admitting failure again."

WALLES